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Turner says Soviets have 'killer satellites'

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WASHINGTON — The Soviet Union has "killer satellites" capable of shooting down United States satellites in orbit, CIA Director Stansfield Turner said yesterday.

"We know," Turner told reporters, "that the Soviet Union has been testing antisatellites and this brings them to an operational capability. They have an operational capability today."

President Carter denied at a press conference held Monday that the Soviet Union can destroy US satellites used to communicate attack orders in case of a nuclear war.

Pentagon sources later said that the Soviet anti-satellite weapons cannot reach the high-flying US communications satellites.

Defense Secretary Harold Brown said last October that it was his judgement that the Soviets had already developed the operational capability to destroy at least some US satellites, apparently those flying in a lower orbit.

The United States has been developing similar space weapons but its pro-

gram is years behind the Soviets, sources said.

Turner, who has generated a good deal of controversy by firing hundreds of CIA operatives stationed at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Va., said that the US reliance on technological spying methods has increased over the years and is "burgeoning every day."

But technical spying devices do not predict the future or measure Soviet intentions, he said, so human spies and analysts are still important.

Turner said the personnel cuts he has made do not reduce the number of spies working overseas. "They were excess people," he said, "who sit there and clog the system, making clandestine collection ineffective."

Some cuts, Turner said, were designed to open upper-level jobs to younger CIA agents so that the agency will have trained people to fill top spots as older officials retire.

Turner attacked fired intelligence agents who have carried their grievances about their dismissal to the press.